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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS IRAQ-KUWAIT OBSERVATION MISSION

(24 September 1996-26 March 1997)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report gives an account of developments and activities in respect of the mandate entrusted to the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), in accordance with Security Council resolutions 687 (1991) of 8 April and 689 (1991) of 14 June 1991 and 806 (1993) of 5 February 1993. It covers the period from 24 September 1996 to 26 March 1997.

II. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE

2. During the period under review, the situation in the demilitarized zone was generally calm. However, overflights by unidentified aircraft increased noticeably.

3. There were fewer complaints by the parties as compared with the previous reporting period: 13 from Kuwait and 10 from Iraq. Complaints by Iraq were about violations of its territorial waters in the Khawr Abd Allah and violations of its airspace over Safwan and Umm Qasr. Complaints by Kuwait were about incursions into its territorial waters in the Khawr Abd Allah, border crossings and shooting violations in the demilitarized zone. The majority of the complaints could not be confirmed. In many cases, there was a considerable time lag between the alleged incident and the time it was reported to UNIKOM.

4. There was an increase in the number of violations in the demilitarized zone. UNIKOM recorded a total of 161 violations, comprising 14 ground incursions and 147 air violations. Ten of the 14 ground incursions were related to the presence of military and armed personnel in the demilitarized zone, while 4 were border crossings into Kuwait by personnel on foot. The air violations, insofar as they could be identified, involved overflights by aircraft of types used by the coalition forces. In addition, there were 59 shooting reports, almost all on the Iraqi side of the demilitarized zone. These were shots heard, often at night, by UNIKOM personnel, who were, however, unable to determine who had fired and with what effect.

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5. From the last days of February into the first part of March UNIKOM observed an increase in activities in the Khawr Abd Allah, including the presence of some armed Iraqi boats within the waterway. It also received complaints from Iraq and Kuwait on alleged violations of their territorial waters. UNIKOM stepped up its monitoring both from the air and on Al Faw peninsula and the situation has since quietened.
6. Activities in the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr increased significantly. Thirty cargo ships docked at the port during the period under review. Repairs on several railway lines into the port were completed and rail operations in the port resumed. Maintenance work on the railways and roads to and from the port continued.
7. Oil drilling and survey activities continued on the Kuwait side of the demilitarized zone. Two new wells became operational and drilling began at two additional sites. Survey activity was also carried out throughout the northern sector. On the Iraqi side, work was conducted on several old wells around patrol and observation post N-7.
8. Kuwait continued to focus on security concerns both over land and in the waterway. The building of a new berm and trench along the boundary of the demilitarized zone was completed during the reporting period. Work continued on an electrified security fence in the zone.
9. As in the past, UNIKOM provided security and logistic support for four meetings of the Technical Subcommittee on Military and Civilian Missing Prisoners of War and Mortal Remains of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). These meetings were held on 6 November and 15 December 1996 and 28 and 29 January and 19 March 1997. They were conducted in the demilitarized zone alternatively at UNIKOM headquarters in Umm Qasr (Iraq) and its support base at Camp Khor (Kuwait).
10. In support of its operations, in particular for clearing track routes, UNIKOM has continually carried out disposal of unexploded mines and bomblets in the demilitarized zone. During the period, it detonated 329 unexploded objects, including 209 aerial bomblets, 15 mortar bombs and 18 artillery shells. Unexploded mines and bomblets inside the zone and in adjacent areas still cause civilian casualties.
11. UNIKOM continued to maintain regular and close liaison with the authorities of both Iraq and Kuwait at various levels, including through its liaison offices in Baghdad and Kuwait City. Both parties cooperated with the Mission in the conduct of its operations.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

12. As of February 1997, the overall strength of UNIKOM was 1,329, as follows:
 - (a) One hundred ninety-seven military observers from Argentina (3), Austria (6), Bangladesh (6), Canada (4), China (11), Denmark (6), Fiji (5), Finland (5), France (11), Ghana (6), Greece (5), Hungary (6), India (5),

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Indonesia (6), Ireland (5), Italy (25), Kenya (7), Malaysia (5), Nigeria (5), Pakistan (5), Poland (6), Romania (5), the Russian Federation (11), Senegal (5), Singapore (7), Sweden (5), Thailand (5), Turkey (5), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (12), Uruguay (5), the United States of America (11) and Venezuela (3);

(b) An infantry battalion of 758 from Bangladesh;

(c) An engineering unit of 50 from Argentina;

(d) A logistics unit of 34 from Austria;

(e) A helicopter unit of 35 from Bangladesh;

(f) A medical unit of 14 from Germany;

(g) Two hundred forty-one civilian staff, of whom 71 were recruited internationally.

Major-General Gian Giuseppe Santillo (Italy) continued as Force Commander.

IV. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

13. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/234 of 7 June 1996, appropriated \$52,141,900 gross for the maintenance of UNIKOM for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997, subject to review by the Security Council with regard to the question of termination or continuation of the Mission. Two thirds of the cost of the Mission, equivalent to some \$33.4 million, is to be funded through voluntary contributions from the Government of Kuwait. Assessments on Member States have been made for the period ending 30 April 1997 and the Government of Kuwait has paid its voluntary contributions for the period ending 30 April 1997.

14. As at 15 March 1997, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNIKOM since the inception of the Mission until 30 April 1997 amounted to \$12,685,897, which represents some 6 per cent of the assessment for the Mission. The unpaid assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations amounted to \$1.8 billion.

V. OBSERVATIONS

15. UNIKOM continues to monitor the demilitarized zone and the Khawr Abd Allah, and, through its vigilance, has contributed to stability and calm along the Iraq-Kuwait border. In carrying out its mandated tasks, UNIKOM had the cooperation of the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait. I recommend that the Mission be maintained.

16. In conclusion I wish to pay tribute to the Force Commander and to the men and women under his command for the manner in which they have carried out their task. Their discipline and bearing have been of a high order, reflecting credit on themselves, their countries and the United Nations.

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